

Effective Practices for the Mainstream Classroom

Goal for students: to develop academic competence while also developing English proficiency

*Most of the following recommended strategies are promoted as good teaching strategies **for all students**. This is an important point because teachers usually don't have time to prepare a separate lesson for their LEP (Limited English Proficient) students and/or to work with them regularly on an individual basis.*

A. Total Physical Response (TPR)

TPR activities **greatly multiply the amount of language input that can be handled by beginning learners**. These activities tie comprehension with performance using low-anxiety, whole-body responses. It is recommended that TPR be utilized for 5-10 minutes at the beginning or end of each class. This approach helps to develop listening skills, increase vocabulary, and model proper English word order.

Steps:

1. The teacher develops scripts that provide students with the vocabulary related to learning situations, such as using a pay phone, getting ready for school, shopping, preparing a meal, conducting an experiment, etc. (*Note that situations may vary according to level*).
2. Students follow the teacher's set of commands to act out an event.
3. The teacher and students make a written copy of the instructions.
4. Students play the roles of the teacher/reader of the series and performer of the actions.

B. Cooperative Learning (CL)

The CL approach uses student-centered learning activities completed by students in heterogeneous groups of two to six. CL assigns roles to each member of the group, so that students of different proficiency levels can work together on a common task. Through shared learning activities, LEP students gain knowledge by observing learning strategies used by their peers. LEP students further benefit from face-to-face verbal interactions, which promote communication that is natural and meaningful. Small group learning also enhances LEP students' language acquisition. CL is proven to be **effective for both academically advanced and lower achieving students**.

C. Language Experience Approach

Implementation:

1. The student is asked to share his/her "experience" (a drawing, something brought from home, a group experience, an experience with the topic in discussion, etc.).
2. The student then dictates his/her story to the teacher or to another student. The writer copies down the story.
3. The teacher reads the story back and students read along.
4. As their language development progresses, students can rewrite their stories and illustrate them.

D. Dialogue Journals

A dialogue journal is a written conversation that a student and teacher carry on regularly (daily, weekly, etc.). Students write as much as they choose and the teacher writes back, responding to students' questions and comments, introducing new topics or asking questions, and promoting language development. **The teacher never corrects students' entries. The students must be assured that journals won't be graded and that nobody else will read them.**

E. Games

Games are especially helpful when the repetition of words or concepts is necessary to increase students' knowledge of vocabulary and concepts that require memorization. **It is recommended that competition be downplayed for most games, that the rules be few, and that they be clearly explained and demonstrated before the game begins.**

F. Content-Centered Language Learning

Content-Centered Language Learning is a method **that integrates English as a Second Language instruction with subject matter instruction.** This technique focuses not only on learning a second language, but also on using that language as a *medium* to learn mathematics, science, social studies, or other academic subjects. The theory behind Content-Centered Language Learning is that language acquisition is based on input that is meaningful and understandable to the learner (Krashen, 1981). Research shows that language is effectively learned when it is a vehicle of instruction, not the object. Students reach a high level of second language development while mastering subject matter.

A content area teacher, or a combination of a content area teacher and an ESL (*English as a Second Language*) teacher, can implement the Content-Centered Language Learning method in their current instructional practices. **By using modified curricula and appropriate teaching strategies,** Content-Centered Language Learning can be used wherever and whenever LEP students receive academic instruction in English. Input is made comprehensible through a variety of means, such as **demonstrations, visual aids, graphic organizers, hands-on-materials, and manipulations of the content.**

TIPS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH TO LEP STUDENTS THROUGH CONTENT AREAS:

- Write the lesson's objectives and activities legibly on the board.
- Develop and maintain routines.
- List instructions step by step.
- Present information in a variety of ways. Put information in a context that is more comprehensible to the students. Emphasize key words and phrases through intonation, repetition, and summarizing on the chalkboard. Give concrete examples. Use pictures and charts. Clarify new concepts (e.g., "The government's funds were diminished. That means the government was almost out of money.").
- Try to answer all the questions that your students ask, but avoid overly detailed explanations. Point to objects and pictures, or demonstrate actions to help get the meaning across.
- Use a variety of questioning techniques.
- Check for understanding often (e.g., "In Arizona, rainfall is minimal during most of the year." To check for understanding, you might ask, "Does it rain much in Arizona?").

G. Multi-Sensory Approach

This approach makes use of the multi-sensory abilities of the human brain and body: auditory, kinesthetic, and visual. All these senses need to be “activated” for better comprehension.

TIPS FOR USING THE MULTI-SENSORY APPROACH WHILE TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE CONTENT AREAS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase “doing” or hands-on activities• Use as many different kinds of media as possible• Encourage small group and paired projects• Increase use of demonstrations

H. Adapting and Modifying Materials

Content area teachers are encouraged to collaborate with their ESL colleagues in **adapting and modifying classroom, homework, and testing materials for LEP students.**

EXAMPLES OF ADAPTATIONS (Using <i>the same</i> materials as the rest of the class)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On a math test, delete word problems and add more computational problems, or grade only the computation part of the test.• In social studies, grade students based on their memorization or recall skills (e.g., naming the states and capitals) or matching words and definitions.• For a spelling assignment, let LEP students draw the definition of words.• For science projects, have students create detailed pictures or models of the subject being studied (i.e., heart, plant, weather, etc.) with labels written in English.

EXAMPLES OF MODIFICATIONS (Using <i>different or additional</i> materials while teaching the same content)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use assignments from lower level textbooks or workbooks that correspond to what the class is learning at the time.• Use lower level reading materials.• Ask some of your native-speaking students to simplify a textbook by rewriting the chapters. The task can be more manageable by giving each native-speaking student a few pages to rewrite. The simplified materials not only help your LEP students, but also other students who may find the regular text too difficult. The students who do the rewriting will benefit from having the opportunity to review and reinforce initial concepts and understandings.• Ask native-speaking students who take comprehensible notes to duplicate them for LEP students to use as study aids.

REMEMBER:

- 1. Materials still need to be interesting!**
- 2. Vocabulary can be simplified, but key technical terms must be retained.**
- 3. Always consider students’ language development.**

TIPS FOR ADAPTING MATERIALS
(Reflecting the student's language proficiency):

- Put the topic sentence first, with supporting details in the subsequent sentences.
- Reduce the number of words in a sentence and the number of sentences in a paragraph.
- Consider word order. Use the subject-verb-object pattern for most sentences.
- Simplify vocabulary that will be used, but retain key concepts and technical terms.
- Limit the use of synonyms in written text and books.
- Introduce new vocabulary with clear definitions and repeat those new words as frequently as possible within text passages.
- Use simpler verb tenses, such as present, simple past, and simple future.
- Write in the active voice, not in the passive voice.
- Eliminate repetitive clauses with "who," "which," or "whom" wherever possible. Make the clause into a separate sentence.
- Convert the content into maps, charts, tables, lists, diagrams, semantic webs, etc.

Sources:

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- Frequently Asked Questions About Teaching ESL Students in the Mainstream
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<http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/f-faq1.htm>